

Our Hope In Life - And Death

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[0 : 00] So let's turn again then to Psalm 16 in our Bibles and it's good to have them in front of us so that we can see these wonderful words for ourselves and consider them.

Because in this glorious Psalm we see something very special, something very special in particular about Jesus, which is so wonderful because the Psalm was written hundreds of years before Jesus became flesh, before the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

This is a Psalm written by King David, King of Israel. And yet David speaking as a prophet tells us something wonderful about Jesus and in particular about Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

And it tells us that because Jesus was raised from the dead, we who put our trust in God will also be raised from the dead.

And therefore we have a sure and certain hope not just in life and in all the difficulties and the troubles and the challenges that daily life brings us, but also when we face that which awaits us all.

[1 : 37] Even when we face death we have a sure and a certain hope because of what God has done in raising Jesus Christ from the dead.

It's a truly great Psalm and the wonderful things, there are so many great things about the Psalms that one of them is, you see here at the very start this is a Psalm of David, David wrote it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

But so many of the Psalms we can take as our own and pray them for ourselves. They are truly the hymn book of the people of God.

And therefore what would delight me most is if after this service, after hearing this word at some point either tonight or through the week you would be able to open your Bible and to read Psalm 16 and really pray that for yourself and be encouraged by it, be lifted up by it and be strengthened by it because it tells us so much about our hope.

Again a hope not just in life but also when facing death itself. We've had recently the privilege at Cumbernauld Free Church where Megan and myself are and where Megan is the women's worker of running a Christianity explored course where people who are interested can find out more about Jesus and about the Christian faith.

[3 : 21] And one man who has been coming along and has been taking lots of notes and asking lots of really great questions. This is one of his great issues which I think is quite unusual in this day and age is that he fears death, is worried about death and has questions about death.

Really in a culture that's trying to avoid death at all costs, even talking about death but certainly trying to extend life or to simply ignore the fact that death awaits us all.

It's the one certain thing about our lives and it's been fascinating in our conversations to be able to say to him, we're telling you about someone who was raised from the dead and who still lives and has the power to reverse death.

For you this is not the end if you put your trust in Jesus but rather the wonderful thing for the Christian is that even facing death they know the best is yet to come.

The best is yet to come. And so I hope that during these discussions and I hope to be able to sit down with him with Psalm 16 and talk about this, talk about how faith in Christ has this hope even in death.

[5 : 05] Now the Psalm itself divides very well into three parts. And the first part is where we see that David confesses the God to be his God.

Where he confesses that God is his God from verses one to three or one to four and contrast that with people who reject God and instead follow after idols who reject the living God.

And then we go on to see that having had this picture of the true God we see that when we confess and come before and put our trust in the true God we experience true security.

As David confesses that the Lord is his chosen portion and his cup and down in verse eight says because he is at my right hand I shall not be shaken, not be shaken he's truly secure. But then we reach really the crescendo if you like of the Psalm as we reach the end because when you know the true God and you experience that true security of putting your trust in him you experience true joy, true joy.

[6 : 43] You see there at verse nine therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices as we experience at the very end in verse eleven fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

That is truly a wonderful thing and it's my prayer that that is something that you will experience more of as we come to consider what God is saying in his word here specifically in Psalm 16. So first of all true God and this is very important, this is very important preserve me oh God for in you I take refuge.

It's such a common refrain in the Psalms that God is the psalmist refuge quite often the psalmist is under pressure, under stress, troubled, maybe under attack there are enemies that seek to hurt him or harm him, even kill him, it's often David and so the call is to the one who can actually help, the one who is God himself, the one who has the power to help as I was saying this morning to the children, there is only one almighty God who has the power to help and so the psalmist here David is saying preserve me oh God for in you I take refuge, recognising that he's the one that can give him refuge and that's a common refrain as I've said throughout the Psalms, my rock and my refuge, my hiding place is God your refuge, your hiding place, the one who you can say in you I take refuge, preserve me Lord, you're my hiding place, you are my rock, that's what David says here but after this initial cry to God, this initial petition, everything else once he thinks about who God actually is, is actually just this joyous confession of his faith in this God, there's no tone after the very first verse where he says preserve me, there's no tone of distress or worry at all because as he turns his gaze upon who God is, he's full of assurance, he's full of a sense of security and even full of a sense of joy because he says in verse 2 I say to the Lord you are my Lord, I have no good apart from you. The psalmist is saying here I say to the Lord you see there it's in capital letters, the first Lord and then he says you are my Lord and that just has a capital L that the rest of the letters are in lower case, that's because what the translators are putting across here is David is saying to Yahweh that the first Lord is God's divine personal covenant name from which he is distinguished from all other false gods and idols, David is saying I say to Yahweh you are my Lord, he's being specific because in his world, surrounded by lots of other nations who worship lots of other idols, he's being very specific by saying I worship this God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, I worship Yahweh and he even though I am the king of Israel is my Lord, is my king. Just a wonderful, very concise confession of his faith in the God who is and it's important to be specific about who God is, we live in a day and age of culture where you might hear people you might even have heard yourself say at times I like to think of God as being dot dot dot such and such but what we like to think of God as being is neither here nor there, the God who is reveals himself in the Bible and that's who he is and that is what he is like and that's where we get this amazing revelation of God choosing to disclose himself in this very specific way in Holy Scripture, that's how we get the picture of who God really is. When I first found this out I was amazed. I thought there is no possible way of knowing who God is or what he's like that's called being unagnostic, certainly not being atheistic and saying there's no God but of going it's impossible to know who's got it right or who's got it wrong until finally I was brought to this place where I started to really read the Scriptures and my eyes were opened in this wonderful way of seeing that this is the God who actually is, this is the God who is there and you can find out so much about him in Scripture and you can know him through reading about him in Scripture, that's the really amazing thing, not just know about him but know him. That's what David's saying here and as a result of that in verse 3 he says, as for the saints in the land there the excellent ones in whom is all my delight because when you know God, the true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent into the world, it is such a common thing to want to be around others who also know

[13 : 09] God. To seek out the fellowship of God's people is such a common desire in those who have come to know God themselves. They want to be around other brothers and sisters in Christ, they get real encouragement and blessing through being in fellowship in this way and David's saying the same things, I delight in the saints in the land. I love being around them because they share this love for the Lord which I have too and in that there is great blessing. As I was praying earlier we're not called to live in isolation or to go it alone but rather to gather into congregations

whereby we can build one another up and encourage each other and bear one another's burdens as we are the body, the one body of Christ and his spirit enlivens the whole body and makes it all work together. That's the joy of Christian fellowship that he's expressing here when we know the true God. That's the true God. Knowing the true God, knowing what he's like, how good he is, how powerful he is, how wonderful he is, how great he is, gives an immediate or certainly it will result in eventually a sense of great security, true security, that's the second aspect of the

Sam that we see here, a sense of true security. Life's full of insecurity isn't it? There are lots of things that are uncertain and not secure if we look at that in a global level, a national level and of course on a personal level there are things that we can't just pin down and nail down that will stay in place, things change and disasters that they seem to us happen, very hard providences come along and sometimes our best laid plans are not what God had planned and they come to nothing.

Insecurity is everywhere but in God we have true security. It's because David as he said earlier, I have no good apart from you, he realises all blessing comes from God that then everything he has he starts to confess from verse 5 onwards, comes from him. The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup, you hold my lot, the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places indeed I have a beautiful inheritance,

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel. All of the good things in David's life he recognises have come from God's own hand and he realises that the culmination of this part of the Psalm in verse 8 simply by beholding God and who he is he realises that because God is at his right hand he shall not be shaken, he won't be shaken. Despite all the trials and tribulations of his life when he remembers who God is and he sets the Lord before him it's like he fills his vision, the vision of the eye of faith with the Lord and when he just lets the Lord fill his vision he's secure, he says I won't be shaken and we have to remember that too so often we can get distracted off of having our eyes fixed on the Lord that's when we get shaken, we're distracted and we're looking at other things but when we set the Lord always before us filling our vision with the Lord that's when we get that sense of security that's at the core of this Psalm I won't be shaken. Are you experiencing challenge or insecurity in that way in any sense in some aspect of your life? With God the Lord if you put your trust in him with him at your right hand you will not be shaken, you will not be shaken not because of any great strength in you obviously but of the great strength in him of the one who is upholding you that's what's so great about David Sam there's no confidence in himself it all comes from the one who he's put his faith in that's what gives him his sense of security and joy. The Lord is my portion and my cup he says in verse five that's a very interesting expression saying that the Lord is his portion. Some of you will know that when Israel and the children of Israel entered the land the promised land it was given out to the different tribes but one tribe wasn't given a piece of land the Lord was their portion and that's the tribe of Levi the priests because they were ministering in the presence of God that was inheritance enough if you like they didn't need land when they had this as their inheritance and you can see that David is using some of that language he's saying it's like I'm a priest ministering in the presence of God that's the intimacy I have with God that's how much I'm able to enjoy his presence and the blessing that comes from that the Lord is my portion indeed I have a beautiful inheritance

David isn't a priest he's not a Levite but he's using that language to express the degree of warm intimacy that he has in the presence of God which gives him that sense of security is available to us in Christ if we are troubled if we're challenged if we're being shaken let us go to the unshakable one and it is the grip the strength of the grip of the unshakable one on us not the feebleness of our grip on him that is the decisive factor he has got us firmly in his grip and has promised that no one can pluck us from his hand that's security that's something to be joyful about and to lay up into your heart tonight but then that's as if that weren't all good enough there's this crescendo there's the climax to the

Psalm which is this overflowing expression of joy but it's the fact that this part clearly contains a prophecy about Jesus that really takes this Psalm to a whole other level of wonder and of brilliance and of glory that we can really relish and enjoy this evening reflected on who God is and how wonderful it is to know God and how that's a great inheritance just to know God himself is blessing enough besides anything else you might get in this world David reflects in verse 9 therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices my flesh also dwells secure gladness and rejoicing in the whole person you see how it's like a triple expression there my heart is glad my whole being rejoices and my flesh also dwells secure there's no part of him that's outside of this sense of joy and

security my heart is glad my whole being rejoices and my flesh or my body rests secure it is felt throughout the whole person it's not something that is purely intellectual in the head this is a felt joy a felt joy that is experienced throughout his whole being indeed also his body but why why is he so glad verse 10 and this really is the key to the whole Psalm the the the centre point the focus the reason David is so secure and so happy is because he says this for you will not abandon my soul to shield or let your holy one seek corruption because you will not abandon my soul to shield or let your holy one see corruption well what does this mean what is David talking about here where is she all for example she all was what the Jews called simply the place of the dead and it was quite often synonymous simply with the grave with the grave itself and you went into the ground when you died and this is she'll but David is saying I'm not going to be abandoned to she'll now what's interesting about that is as the apostle Peter points out during that amazing sermon on the day of Pentecost when the apostles were all gathered together and the Holy Spirit came down Jesus having ascended he sent his spirit and it empowered and anointed the church and the apostles and Peter said if this Sam was only speaking about David how do you explain this David's grave is over there David's body did see decay because it's still in the ground it's still in the tomb along with the body of every other single person that's ever lived and then died it's in the grave so it can't just be speaking about David now

[25 : 15] of course on one level David is saying I trust in you for eternal life yeah he's saying to God I know the grave is not the end you won't abandon me forever to she'll and so I know that I will see you beyond the grave and I'll experience in your presence in your presence fullness of joy but Peter points out in Acts chapter 2 I'll read from the from verse 22 just so that we hear all of this and are able to take this in as to how significant this is Peter says addressing this huge crowd of Jews men of Israel hear these words Jesus of Nazareth I'm an attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and for knowledge of God you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men God raised him up loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it for David says concerning him I saw the Lord always before me for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced my flesh also will dwell in hope for you will not abandon my soul to Hades nor let your holy one seek corruption you have made known to me the paths of life and will make me full of gladness with your presence brothers I say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day being there for a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ that he was not abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh seek corruption this

Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses being there for exalted at the right hand of God and received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing David in the spirit inspired of God is writing about the resurrection of Jesus Christ here because David himself has not yet been raised his soul of course is with God in his presence but his body has not yet been raised up only Jesus only he in his body has been raised and is bodily in the presence of the living God now why does this matter why should we care because death awaits every single person and if we put our trust in Christ the one whose body did not seek corruption we will not ultimately be abandoned to the grave our soul will immediately when we die go to be with the Lord but the even greater hope is that on the great day our bodies will be raised and be reunited with our souls so that we are complete and we will be glorified bodily and dwell bodily with Jesus Christ in glory that's why Jesus took a body we sometimes seem to think well it's better to be away from the body and just be a soul in the presence of God but our ultimate future is in a glorified body otherwise what would have been the whole point of Jesus Christ taking a body as one of the great ancient church fathers Gregory said that which is not assumed is not healed that which is not assumed is not healed therefore Jesus assumed human flesh in order to heal it so that we might have a life beyond death in the body that is the resurrected future of the Christian that is what we have to look forward to and it is bliss beyond our imagining as David says at the very close of this Sam at your right hand are pleasures forevermore this is the path of life the path of life that enters through the gate Jesus Christ through the gate are you on the path of life because on the path of life the destination is fullness of joy in the presence of God forever fullness of joy in the presence of God forever and

pleasures forevermore at his right hand isn't that amazing isn't that a hope to be cherished and to be meditated upon and to be trusted in because when you have a hope that's this secure and a joy that's this overflowing then you're pretty effective witness for the reality of the gospel for the truth of the gospel when this is exuding out of you people will start to take this seriously that person has a unshakable hope which I just can't get my head around and that's our hope for this man that's been coming to Christianity explored that he will see that this is real because Christians have a hope beyond anything imaginable that anything else in this world can offer is that your hope tonight if so hallelujah praise God for that because it is all of his grace but of course we remember that outside of Christ there is abandonment to shield there is ultimate death and despair there's nothing like security unless it's through some kind of delusion and there's no real joy either because there's no knowledge of the true God and that is why we seek to make Christ known why we are passionate about sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ because it's the path of life it's the path into knowledge of the true God which brings true security and true joy because Jesus was raised from the dead and it's a fact do we have this trust tonight let's renew our trust in the one whose body did not see decay the father would not do it would not let the son's body see decay instead he raised them to life and he walked victoriously out of that tomb and when we go beyond death we will see him face to face face to face with Jesus and when we see him

we will become like him Amen may God bless these thoughts on his holy word well we are going to sing once more sing Psalm 16 verses 1 to 6 this is what my wife was trying to draw my attention to earlier I think was the fact that we were supposed to be singing so we'll sing Psalm 16 verses 1 to 6 I'll say a prayer and then we'll sing the next part of Psalm 16 this part's from the Scottish Psalter on page 215 Lord keep me for I trust in thee to God thus was my speech thou art my God unto thee my goodness doth not reach I'll say this is providential because we can now sing the whole of this thinking about what we've heard from it tonight so let's sing this first part to God's praise unto thee my goodness doth not reach to today's ornate, the excellent, where my delight so clings, that sorrow's shall be multiplied to other hopes that date all their drink of praise, all the blood I will no offremake in either eye, there then he may stop in my lips, will take the days of mine in inheritance and cup the portion, the log that falleth to me thou dost may say no more, unto me happily the lines and pleasant places fell, they are in her inheritance I call in beauty doth excel.

I'll let Donald get his breath back and we'll just say a short prayer before we then sing the concluding part of this Psalm.

[38 : 24] Let us pray. Father, we thank you so much for this wonderful Psalm in which we see your servant putting so much trust in you and seeing that all good things come from you.

Help us to see that too that apart from you we have no good thing. And also Lord, help us to realise that when we go after other gods, idols of the heart, that our sorrows do increase.

Help us Lord to turn back from those things and to turn towards you the living God. We thank you Lord that you are the one who guides us, you are the one who instructs us.

For apart from your word we would be so lost. Thank you for your word. And Father, help us to set you constantly before us, for when we do we know we won't be shaken.

Help us Lord to have this overflowing gladness and joy when we think about the future that is in store for us, for truly we can say the best is yet to come.

[39 : 41] Because we have not yet come into your nearer presence, but one day we will. When death the last enemy is finally conquered and Satan is cast into the lake of fire.

Oh Lord, we will enjoy pleasures at your right hand forever. And we want to sing about that now in confidence and in trust in you.

And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So now we will sing the last part of this Psalm from the Sing Psalms version, which is just wonderful.

I hope as we have been thinking about these verses and as you I hope will pray them as well for yourself putting your trust in God tonight or in the week ahead, you will be able to sing this as well and will stand and sing to God's praise.

I'll pray the Lord my God, whose counsel guides my joys, and live anew, and light my heart, because instructions was before me constantly.

[41 : 15] I said the Lord alone, because He is at my right hand, I'll not be overthrown.

My heart is glad, my tongue with God will sing, my body too will rest secure in hope and wavering, for you will not allow my soul in death to stay, nor will you leave your world.

So that your eye can Joy from your face will shine.

Let us pray. When I saw him I fell at his feet as though dead, But he laid his right hand on me, saying, Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died and behold, I am alive forevermore, And I have the keys of death and Hades. Father, we thank you so much for your son, And we pray, Lord, as we look ahead, Our days are in your hands. [43 : 50] Lord, we pray you would richly bless us and keep us, For we ask it in his name. Amen.